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<input type="checkbox"/>	Doctor's thesis

Subject	Information systems science	Date	24.09.2004
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		Number of pages	89
Title	ERP systems implementation in a multinational environment –risks and opportunities		
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Abstract

The research questions of this thesis concentrate on examining the challenges that companies encounter, when they implement an ERP system, and on investigating the different phases of which an implementation project consists. Also studied are different implementation strategies and the risks and opportunities, related to them. There is also a focus on the different national characteristics and on the different behavioural aspects within the organisation of multinational companies from an information system implementation perspective. The theoretical part studies ERP systems, their implementation in general, the national-, and organisational differences, and their role and influence on the entire information systems implementation project. In the empirical part of this thesis, the emphasis is on one international company, the MacGREGOR Group, and on the different phases of its SAP R/3 implementation process, which started in 1995. The case study-method has been chosen to concentrate on the research of the systems implementation project of one specific company. Five members of the implementation team of the case company were interviewed by using semi-structured questions in theme interviews. It was discovered during the study that it is required for a successful result of an ERP systems implementation that multinational companies take into consideration the impacts of the different cultural- and national environments within their organisations. The management has to decide, for example, on how much decision power they grant to the local operations during the implementations. The decision between a rapid, so-called big bang, implementation and some slower paced implementation approaches depends largely on the business of the company and the shape of the organisation and its operating procedures. Thorough project planning is important, the project strategy, its goals, scope, schedule, means of communication, milestones and its possible risks should be well defined, in order to be able to avoid or minimise the negative effects of unexpected situations. It is also crucial to build up a professional implementation team. The support of the top-management, good planning, open communication and finding a good balance between implementing organisational adjustments and making changes to the standard system are the key success-factors of any ERP system implementation. The implementation often requires rearrangements within the organisation and consequently, the learning of new operating procedures. The users have to be given adequate training on the new working practices and they should be provided with proper support and guidance, both during and after the implementation. Despite of the risks of their implementations, ERP systems are competitive systems for modern international organisations. They can offer many possibilities to develop companies further and to improve their efficiency and customer relationships.

Key words	ERP system, Enterprise Resource Planning, system implementation
Further information	